

Topic: Alternatives to Abortion Program

Issue Summary

In 2005, a rider (Section 50, Special Provisions Article II, S.B. 1, 79th Texas Legislature) authored by Sen. Tommy Williams (R-The Woodlands) created the statewide Alternatives to Abortion program. In October 2005, HHSC issued an RFP for “the development and operation of a statewide program for females focused on pregnancy support services that promote childbirth.” In March 2006, HHSC began contracting with the Texas Pregnancy Care Network (TPCN) to administer the Alternatives to Abortion program.

Key Points

Providers and Services

- As of January 2013, the Alternatives to Abortion program comprised 33 providers with 47 sites throughout the state.
- Alternatives to Abortion providers offer free support services for pregnant women seeking alternative options to abortion.
- Their goal is to provide pregnant women with options and support to encourage childbirth by providing:
 - Information regarding pregnancy and parenting (brochures, pamphlets, books, classes, and counseling)
 - Referrals to existing community services and social service programs (child-care services, transportation, low-rent housing, etc.)
 - Mentoring program (classes on life skills, budgeting, parenting, stress management, counseling, and obtaining their GED)
 - Material goods for pregnant women (car seats, maternity clothes, infant diapers, formula, etc.)
- Clients can continue to receive these services until the child is one year old.
- TPCN does not directly provide client services; instead, it distributes funding for the Alternatives to Abortion program by reimbursing participating service providers throughout Texas.

Appropriations, Number of Clients Served, Costs and Reimbursement Rates

- The legislature appropriated \$4,150,000 per year for FY 2012 and FY 2013. Approximately 70% of the funding is Federal TANF and 30% is GR.
- Clients Served and Costs in FY 12:
 - Clients served: 13,650
 - Client visits: 53,413

- Average cost per client: \$_____
 - Average cost per client visit: \$_____
 - Administrative overhead: _____% of its total budget
- The provider reimbursement rates proposed by TPCN and agreed to by HHSC have not been adjusted for inflation or other reasons since the inception of the program in 2005. The rate is \$1.05 per minute for counseling. TPCN proposed the same rate that had been used for over 10 years by Pennsylvania's Real Alternatives Program—the program which served as a model in developing the Alternatives to Abortion Program in Texas.

TPCN Provider Evaluation, Selection, Monitoring, and Reimbursement

- TPCN standards for ensuring quality services are reflected in its Service Provider Selection Process and its ongoing monitoring and training procedures. Before TPCN agrees to evaluate a potential service provider, the organization must demonstrate, among other criteria that it:
 - is a 501(c)3 nonprofit;
 - has a minimum of one year of experience providing core pregnancy support services;
 - does not charge a fee for services to eligible clients; and
 - agrees not to promote the teaching or philosophy of any religion while providing services.
- Potential providers that meet the criteria must then submit an extensive list of documents regarding the organization's policies, procedures, governance, legal structure, and more. TPCN reviews and evaluates these documents and then inspects the physical site (facilities) of the potential provider.
- Following the initial site visit, service provider staff must:
 - certify they have a four-year degree in a social service or nursing field of study, or have otherwise acquired comprehensive pregnancy counseling/mentoring skills and training;
 - be trained in program compliance (with mandatory re-training at end of each fiscal year);
 - undergo child abuse and criminal background checks (renewed annually); and
 - agree to follow policies on non-discrimination, confidentiality, and limited English proficiency.
- TPCN begins various forms of ongoing monitoring and inspection (daily, monthly, and annually), once an organization becomes a service provider for the Alternatives to Abortion program. As a consequence of non-compliance with services that have already been reimbursed by the program, TPCN deducts the value of those services from the provider's reimbursement for the following month.

- In addition to regular contract monitoring by HHSC, TPCN is audited annually by independent CPA audits that are conducted according to the standards of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget Circular A-133. All audits to date have resulted in unqualified opinions.
- TPCN also earned the Seal of Excellence from the Standards for Excellence Institute in Maryland, a peer-review based accreditation program for organizations wishing to demonstrate that they are adhering to high standards of effectiveness and accountability in nonprofit governance, management, operations, and facilities. To earn the Seal of Excellence, a national team of nonprofit experts evaluated TPCN for compliance with 55 performance standards.

NARAL Report/Concerns

- In March 2011, the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League (NARAL) Pro-Choice Texas Foundation issued a report expressing a number of concerns regarding the structure, funding, and administration of the Alternatives to Abortion program.
- One of NARAL's concerns is that the program diverts resources away from existing medical and reproductive health services programs.

Response

- The program was established to provide social services such as counseling, mentoring, education, materials assistance, and shelter to pregnant women, rather than to provide any medical services.
- HHSC's RFP acknowledged that since many existing organizations in Texas provide support services to promote childbirth, the Alternatives to Abortion program is actually "intended to supplement and expand the availability and use of such services."

HHSC Staff Contact

Should you have any questions or need additional information, please contact the following HHSC staff:

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